

SPEECH

Remarks by USAID/Cambodia Mission Director Erin Soto, Launching of the CTIP Task Force

Phnom Penh

April 6, 2007

Excellency Madame You Ay, Excellencies, ladies and gentleman. Good morning and welcome everyone to this first meeting of Cambodian TIP Taskforce.

On March 12, 2007, Prime Minister Hun Sen established the National Task Force to eliminate trafficking of people in Cambodia. Madame You Ay has been appointed as Chair of the Task Force. USAID and TAF are happy to play a small part in supporting this Government initiative.

One of the obstacles to eliminating TIP is the lack of coordination among all the government and non-governmental organization working toward this common goal. This was first brought to my attention by the Minister of Women's Affairs, HE Ing Kantha Phavi nearly eight months ago. There are over 200 national and international organizations working on different aspects of anti-human trafficking. There are about 55 shelters. There are up to 14 ministries working on TIP issues. Although each of us has made and continue to make a tremendous contribution toward the elimination of trafficking, we have not been able to eliminate trafficking in Cambodia. Everyone has an important part to play.

No one organization or work is any more or less important than the other. Each organization brings a particular focus or strength and, in the case of the Government, responsibility and authority. None of us have enough staff, time, or funds and unfortunately none is fully coordinated with all of the others. Through better coordination and collaboration, we will, together, have a bigger impact. What the Government is doing with this NTF and with the power of the government structure is to put in place a framework for enhanced coordination – to capitalize on all of your good will and good work and to one day, soon, eliminate trafficking.

The objective is neither to control the work of any organization nor to put any organization on top of another in a hierarchy of importance. In many respects, our diversity is our strength. The objective is to ensure the broadest and deepest coverage, to ensure issues are brought forward for resolution, to ensure action is taken which ultimately leads to abolition of trafficking.

Trafficking is wrong and we all hope to eliminate it. We need to root out the perpetrators where ever they many be and regardless of who they are. We need to protect and rehabilitate the victims. We need to raise awareness and educate for the prevention. How best to accomplish all of these things, is the work of the Task Force. I recognize there are issues to be worked out - issues of witness protection, and standards of care, among many others. Ultimately, the success of this Task Force will be judged by the number of prosecutions, the number of victims protected and reintegrated into society and the prevention measures enforced by the government. Will all of us working together in an organized framework, we can take advantage of each of our strengths and unique contributions toward the elimination of trafficking in Cambodia.

Thank you to Madame Chair for your leadership and I wish you all well in your discussions today.